

**9) Briefly summarize the status and results of public involvement. Briefly describe how the public involvement process complied with EO 12898 on Environmental Justice.**

On August 19, 1998, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee recommended Alternative 4 to the De Pere Board of Public Works. After further review and input, the Board of Public Works supported Alternative 4 and passed it on to the City Council.

The De Pere City Council, at its January 19, 1999 meeting, rejected the recommendation of Alternative 4 and selected Alternative 3 Two Bridge Alternative. This bridge alternative was also strongly supported by local residents as reflected in the *(De Pere Bridge Alternatives Survey (Appendix G))* conducted during November and December of 1998 by the St. Norbert College Research Center. With a 54% response rate of 1052 households surveyed, Alternative 3 was favored by 66% of the respondents. The general consensus of those individuals supporting the two-bridge scenario was that this alternative would have the least impact on the De Pere community.

As might be expected with a project of this size, located in the middle of a community, there has been a great deal of local controversy over which alternative should be selected. As a result of this controversy, one taxpayer developed a Petition for Direct Legislation and successfully submitted it to the De Pere City Council for action. The Petition, as written, required that the City either adopt or send to a binding referendum the following resolution: "The De Pere City Council adopts a resolution to rebuild or repair, but retain a two lane bridge on the existing Claude Allouez site in downtown De Pere." The City Council did not take the required action to adopt the resolution and therefore, the resolution was sent to a referendum vote in April of 2002. The referendum failed by a margin of 5295 to 854, with a 55% voter turnout. It is the consensus of most individuals knowledgeable about the referendum results, that the referendum failed because the resolution, if passed, would have required the existing bridge to be closed for an extended period of time during its rebuilding or repair. This situation was unacceptable to the community for both public safety and economic reasons. Over the years, the bridge has been closed for various routine maintenance activities and the local businesses have experienced significant financial losses. This referendum vote shows the overwhelming majority of voters in De Pere do not want to pursue a No Build Alternative (Alternative 7).

During the preparation of the environmental document, numerous meetings were held with the project stakeholders. Each of the alternatives will have a different impact or level of impact on the community. The basic concerns with arriving at the preferred alternative has been that the impacts on the community are valued by the various stakeholders in different ways. It has been difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at a consensus as to what impacts are more important than others. The goals, as originally set by the Ad Hoc Planning Committee, have been for the most part difficult to adhere to and the individual special interest groups have significantly impacted the bridge planning process. One of the groups has called themselves the Alternative Bridge Coalition (ABC group). The ABC Group is a coalition of individuals, including parties from outside of the City of De Pere, who will benefit directly from the construction of a new "southern" bridge ([Exhibit 31](#)) and De Pere residents and business leaders who are opposed to constructing a new bridge in downtown De Pere with additional lane capacity. The ABC Group is promoting the construction of a "southern" bridge to be built several miles south of the current Claude Allouez Bridge. The group believes that the construction of a "southern" bridge will significantly reduce the current and future volume of traffic crossing the Claude Allouez Bridge. As noted earlier, this opinion is in direct opposition with the Brown County Transportation Plan, which states that the southern bridge would not alleviate the traffic volumes to any great extent on the Claude Allouez Bridge. The plan specifically notes that the "southern" bridge is intended to handle traffic with origins south, east, and west of the De Pere community. This traffic does not currently exist to a level that justifies the expenditure of Brown County funds for a new bridge. The Brown County Planning Commission feels that the acceleration of the southern bridge will facilitate urban sprawl and therefore, has historically opposed the project before traffic needs justify it. The current plan calls for the structure to be in place in 2020. While the Brown County Plan states that the two projects should be undertaken separately and at different times, the construction of this southern bridge is assumed as a part of the planning for this project. The "southern" bridge is a part of the overall transportation plan for Brown County and without the southern bridge; the 2020 traffic projections for the Claude Allouez Bridge would increase significantly.

The planning and construction of the "southern" bridge (bridge located south of the City of De Pere) has been gaining support in the local area communities. Funding sources are currently being investigated.

The southern bridge proponents have also suggested that STH 32 be relocated from the Claude Allouez Bridge to the proposed "southern" bridge in hopes of gaining the necessary funding and reducing the need and the scope of the Claude Allouez Bridge project. The relocation of the STH 32 designation, would not impact the need and scope of the Claude Allouez Bridge project. Due to the structural condition of the bridge, it would still need to be replaced. In addition, the traffic volumes would remain at a level still requiring a four-lane capacity crossing. The relocation of STH 32 is not, at this time, being considered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

**Public Informational Meetings:** Numerous public informational meetings have been held in the City of De Pere for providing project updates and soliciting public comments and suggestions regarding the project. As described in #8 above, all residents/property owners in the area of the project were invited to the public meetings. The meetings were held on:

- August 5, 1998 (Location Study Information Meeting)
- March 15, 2001 (Public Informational Meeting)
- September 11, 2001 (Public Forum)
- January 3, 2002 (Public Forum)
- February 12, 2002 (Public Forum)
- March 18, 2002 (Public Information Meeting)
- September 11, 2002 (Public Information Meeting)

Refer to (**Claude Allouez Bridge Location Study**) ([Appendix F](#)) and (**Public Input**) ([Appendix U](#)) for the August 5, 1998 meeting and the March 15, 2001 meeting respectively for information on these meetings.

**Project Newsletters/Brochures:** A number of newsletters and informational documents were distributed prior to focus group informational meetings and general public informational meetings (**Public Input**) ([Appendix U](#)). The newsletters were sent on:

- April 2000
- March 2001
- June 2001
- September 2001
- March 2002 (2 newsletters)

**Focus Group Informational Meetings:** Two focus group meetings were held for the people in the vicinity of the bridge. The first meeting was held on April 13, 2000 for business and government representatives. The second meeting was held on April 25, 2000 for property owners and school and church representatives. Copies of the reports for the meetings are in (**Public Input**) ([Appendix U](#)).

**City Council Meetings:** Numerous presentations were given to the De Pere City Council. The local cable company taped the Council Meetings and continuously broadcasted many of the meetings to the cable viewers in the community. The council meetings were held on the following dates:

- October 3, 2000
- February 6, 2001
- September 18, 2001
- March 5, 2002
- March 19, 2002
- August 6, 2002
- August 20, 2002
- September 3, 2002
- October 1, 2002

**Business Group Meetings:** Numerous meetings were held with the De Pere Business Alliance (previously known as De Pere Business Association) to discuss various aspects of the project, including parking, bridge aesthetics, etc. The meetings were held on the following dates:

- December 14, 2000
- February 20, 2001
- March 6, 2001
- March 27, 2001

- April 5, 2001
- June 20, 2001
- December 19, 2001
- January 3, 2002
- January 16, 2002
- April 29, 2002

Topics of Comments: For the most part, the individuals opposed to this project have been more vocal than those supporting the project. The majority of comments center around the traffic congestion in downtown De Pere, especially, in conjunction with the bridge and its capacity to handle traffic. The opponents of the bridge feel that the roadways in and around the bridge are too congested. Some of those individuals opposed to a four-lane bridge feel that additional bridge capacity will attract more traffic and destroy the small-town atmosphere of De Pere. The main emphasis of the opposition has been to promote the construction of the proposed county bridge south of De Pere. The four-lane bridge opposition feels that the southern bridge will remove significant traffic, primarily trucks, to justify the construction of a single two-lane bridge in downtown De Pere. A second issue that has been raised by many of the downtown businesses on the east side is on-street parking. The business community is interested in maintaining on-street parking on Broadway. A third topic is a concern of St. Norbert College. The college feels that there will be significant impacts to the viability of the college if the bridge is moved closer to the college and the bridge is expanded from the current two lanes to four lanes. Minimizing noise impacts, maintaining current river vista, and preventing the crossing from becoming a freeway are all concerns raised by the college.

#### Public Information Activities

In addition to the above items, the following was completed:

- **Identification of Stakeholders.**

It was initially believed there would be just 250 stakeholders but, as the project progressed, it became clear the number needed to be expanded. As a result, more than 500 stakeholders, including businesses, residents, governmental entities, governmental leaders and educational facilities were identified and a database developed.

- **Informational / educational brochure.**

An informational / educational brochure was developed and sent to targeted persons on the mailing list. The brochure was also placed on display at key locations throughout the community including: library, police station, city hall and community center.

- **Web Site Development**

WisDOT established a web page on their web site in order to provide current information about the bridge project. This "page" actually consisted of 9 pages, which provides comprehensive project information. The City of De Pere, as well as the Green Bay Press Gazette, also included information on their respective web sites.

- **Education / Information panels**

Several informational panel displays were created. The displays were located at both the De Pere City Hall and the De Pere Library. Accompanying the displays are project brochures.

- **Small Group Meetings**

Small group meetings, including meeting presentations, have taken place with key stakeholders in the community (i.e. Brown County Home Builders, St. Norbert College, Neighborhood Groups, etc.).

- **Local Media**

Since 1998 the local media has played an active role in communicating information to the project stakeholders. In part, the interest shown by the media was a result of the controversy surrounding the project and its final impact on the community. In addition to almost continuous coverage the local media participated in two significant events. On March 13, 2002, WisDOT held a media tour of the existing bridge. The intent of this tour was to provide information to the citizens through local newspapers and television stations on the condition of the bridge. WisDOT also participated in Editorial Board Meetings with the Green Bay Press Gazette, Green Bay News Chronicle, and De Pere Journal. Subsequent project coverage was included in those newspapers. WisDOT also participated in a local news talk radio (WGEE-Rick Allen) to answer project questions.

- **Other**

Meeting announcements and other information was included in water and sewer bills to customers.

**a) Identify groups (e.g., elderly, handicapped), minority populations and low-income populations that participated in the public involvement process. This would include any organizations and special interest groups.**

Eleven Native American Groups, Intertribal Council and the Bureau of Indian Affairs were notified of the project. Those expressing interest in the project were the Forest County Potawatomi Community and the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin.

Representatives from St. Mary's Parish, St. Francis Parish, and St. Norbert College were invited to and present at the public meetings.

**b) Describe, briefly, the issues, if any, identified by any groups, minority populations and/or low-income populations during the public involvement process.**

At the April 25, 2000 meeting, representatives of two of the local catholic parishes had issues regarding the potential increase in traffic adjacent to their facilities. Father Anthony Dolski commented that a four-lane alternative for the bridge would have a serious impact on St. Francis Parish if the approach roadways went up Charles Street past the church. He asked to be kept informed during the environmental assessment. Lois Schumacher, representing St. Mary's Parish (Notre Dame School), commented that the schools (along the project area) would have to select drop off and pick up sites for the children. She also stated that the children's safety would be compromised if the east approach went thru the Notre Dame schoolyard.

St. Norbert College has communicated a number of concerns regarding any alternative that moves the proposed bridge closer to the college campus. The concerns included increased noise levels on the dorms, a loss of river vista, and the ultimate change of a local roadway to a freeway. At the March 15, 2001 meeting, William Hynes, President of St. Norbert's College, stated that the bridge (south of the dam) is not for De Pere and it will destroy a quaint downtown. He said the college would have the most number of residents impacted by the bridge. His recommendation was to build a new bridge next to the current bridge, so that it is located as far as possible from the college. He also suggested that the proposed county bridge (south of De Pere) should be built in order to keep truck traffic out of downtown De Pere. At the March 15, 2001 meeting, Jim Hodgson with St. Norbert's College stated that the issue comes down to the quality of life, and there is definitely a need for an environmental assessment.

The Forest County Potawatomi Community and the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin requested copies of information acquired through Phase II archaeological surveys.

A group of individuals calling themselves the Alternative Bridge Coalition (ABC Group) raised significant concerns about the construction of a proposed four-lane bridge in downtown De Pere. The group, made up of De Pere residents and individuals located in adjacent communities, firmly opposed a project that increased the capacity of the crossing. The group's overall goal was to accelerate the completion of a new bridge to be located south of De Pere. Brown County is planning to complete the bridge located

south of De Pere by 2020. Transportation analysis completed by the Brown County Planning Commission has predicated that the “southern” bridge will be needed to handle future traffic created by development south of De Pere. Accelerating the completion of the bridge is not expected to significantly reduce traffic crossing the Claude Allouez Bridge and is expected, if constructed early, to cause urban sprawl.

As a result of the Claude Allouez Bridge controversy, one De Pere resident authored a Petition for Direct Legislation and submitted the Petition to the De Pere City Council for action. The Petition, as written, required that the City either adopt or send to binding referendum the following resolution: “The De Pere City Council adopts a resolution to rebuild or repair, but retain a two lane bridge on existing Claude Allouez site in downtown De Pere.” The City Council did not take the required action to adopt the resolution and therefore, the resolution was sent to a referendum vote in April of 2002. The referendum failed by a margin of 5295 to 854, with a 55% voter turnout. It is the consensus of most individuals knowledgeable about the referendum results, that the referendum failed because the resolution, if passed, would have required the existing bridge to be closed for an extended period of time during its rebuilding or repair. This situation was unacceptable to the community for both public safety and economic reasons. Over the years, the bridge has been closed for various routine maintenance activities and the local businesses have experienced significant financial losses.

**c) Briefly describe how the issues identified above were addressed. Include a discussion of those that were avoided as well as those that were minimized and those that are to be mitigated. Include a brief discussion of proposed mitigation, if any.**

The concerns about increased traffic levels proceeding past the school and church were eliminated when several approach alternatives, involving Wisconsin Street, were identified. East side approach roadways for all alternatives that cross the river south of the dam are no longer routed past St. Francis Church or Notre Dame School. All of the current alternatives involving a bridge located south of the dam show Charles Street being closed at Wisconsin Street. Whether Charles Street is closed or whether the City keeps it open allowing limited movement into and out of the street (i.e. right turn only), the anticipated traffic using the street will be local only and should not increase above the levels currently being experienced. This should ease the concerns expressed by the representatives of St Mary’s Parish and St. Francis Parish.

To alleviate the concerns of St. Norbert College, all of the alternatives will be routed at the west bridge abutment, as close as feasible to the existing bridge, to maximize the distance between the college and the bridge. The alignment of any bridge built south of the dam will follow a curved alignment to maximize the distance between the proposed bridge and the dorms. Preliminary estimates put the cost of a curved bridge at 10 and 15 per cent more than a straight bridge. St. Norbert College has offered to pay the local share of the increased cost for the curved bridge. The De Pere City Council has accepted the college’s offer and has taken formal action by resolution to support a curved bridge for any alternative that is built south of the dam. Estimated cost to the college will be between \$100,000 and \$130,000, depending on the final alternative. Concerns regarding noise may not be an issue. A traffic noise impact evaluation has been completed. The evaluation has predicted no perceivable increase in noise levels at the dorms due to a realigned bridge. Finally, the college suggested that the bridge be built next to the existing bridge. If the crossing were to remain two lanes, this suggestion would probably have been feasible. Since the bridge capacity is proposed to be increased to four lanes due to current and projected traffic volumes, any four lane bridge constructed on the same or similar alignment, whether it is a single bridge similar to Alternative 6 (New four-lane bridge on current alignment) or two two-lane bridges will have significant impacts on the downtown.

The ABC Group’s suggestion that Brown County’s “southern” bridge be built immediately to reduce the volume of traffic on the Claude Allouez Bridge has been forwarded to the Brown County Planning Commission. The Planning Commission has taken action to accelerate the planning for the bridge. Based on Planning Commission traffic models, the construction of the “southern” bridge will not significantly impact the traffic volumes on the Claude Allouez Bridge. The “southern” bridge will carry traffic that for the most part does not currently exist. It should be noted, that without the “southern” bridge, as proposed in 2020, traffic will increase significantly on the Claude Allouez Bridge.

The results of the Phase I and II Archaeological Investigations have been completed and copies of the investigations will be sent to the Forest County Potawatomi Community and the Menominee Indian Tribe

of Wisconsin in response to their request.

One resident's desire, through a binding referendum, to construct a two-lane bridge on the current bridge alignment was overwhelmingly rejected by the City residents. While the desire to keep what is currently in place is supported by a portion of the community, it does not meet the purpose and need for this project.